

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 CU-04 NIC-01 COME-00 DRC-01 /124 W

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R 081720Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LOME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7646

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L L O M E 0 9 7 8

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TO

SUBJ: "AUTHENTICITY": EYADEMA DROPS HIS CHRISTIAN NAME

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. PRES ETIENNE GNASSINGBE EYADEMA REPORTEDLY TOLD MEETING OF SOCCER TEAM MANAGERS AND SPORTS CLUB OFFICIALS (SEPTTEL) AT RPT HOUSE THIS MORNING (MAY 8) THAT HE NO LONGER WILL USE HIS "IMPORTED" NAME ITIENNE, AND HE WANTS IT DROPPED FROM ALL SONGS, CHEERS AND OTHER POPULAR EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT. HE REPORTEDLY SAID THIS WAS A "PERSONAL DECISION, BUT ONE OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE." SPEECH IN WHICH HE MADE THIS STATEMENT WAS BROADCAST ON NOONTIME RADIO NEWS AND WILL BE ON TV AND RADIO TONIGHT; TOGO-PRESSE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY FRONT-PAGE IT TOMORROW AND WE WILL THEN HAVE BETTER ACCOUNT.

END UNCLASSIFIED

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2. COMMENT: FOR MONTHS, IT HAS BEEN EXPECTED THAT EYADEMA WOULD TAKE MORE PAGES OUT OF MOBUTU'S BOOK, OVER AND ABOVE USE OF HUNDREDS OF ORGANIZED CHEERLEADERS WHO NOW APPEAR AS ROOTING SECTION WHEREEVER HE MAKES MAJOR APPEARANCE. NOW, IT LOOKS AS IF HE HAS REALLY DONE IT, ALTHOUGH HE WAITED UNTIL AFTER MOBUTU'S "TRAVELING CIRCUS" HAD GONE HOME. TO WHAT EXTENT HE INTENDS TO MAKE, OR THINKS HE CAN MAKE, LARGE CHRISTIAN MINORITY (25 PERCENT OF POPULATION, APPROXIMATELY) FOLLOW HIS LEAD IN DROPPING CHRISTIAN NAMES REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT IS DEFINITELY GOING TO GO DOWN HARD WITH TOGOLESE CHRISTIANS OVER 30, BUT HE MAY BE ABLE TO SELL IT TO YOUTH.

3. COMMENT CONTINUED: TOGO'S CATHOLIC HIERARCHY WILL CERTAINLY NOT WELCOME THIS MOVE, SINCE "AUTHENTICITY" TENDS TO STRENGTHEN ANIMISM. AT LAMA-KARA ON SUNDAY, MAY 6, EYADEMA, MIN INFORMATION EKLO AND HORDE OF LOME "ANIMATEURS ET ANIMATRICES" PARTICIPATED IN "TRADITIONAL CEREMONY CELEBRATED BY 'TCHOTCHO' CABRAIS PRIESTS AND TRADITIONAL CHIEFS," ACCORDING TO MAY 7 "TOGO-PRESSE." OBJECT OF CELEBRATION: PILGRIMAGE TO PLANE WRECKAGE AND COMMEMORATION OF "MIRACLE OF SAKAKAWA." SEEMS THAT EYADEMA IS INSTINCTIVELY BUILDING UP A CULT AROUND HIS MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL -- AND THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN WRECKAGE MARVEL ANYONE LIVED THROUGH IT - AND REVERSION TO AUTHENTICITY, INCLUDING THAT OLD-STYLE RELIGION. END CONFIDENTIAL.
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